

Having finished our exposition of this book this morning, I thought it would be useful to end our consideration of this letter with five summary lessons—if I were to ask you, what are some of the major themes of 1John, what truths immediately come to mind, what would they be—let me suggest five that readily came to mind when I asked myself these questions...

Yet before we go any further let me begin by giving three brief introductory thoughts—[1] these lessons are necessary—by this I mean we have the tendency to forget what we've learned—most of us spent 67 hours within this book and yet some of us have to confess that we remember precious little—thus it's necessary for us to boil down its primary themes into a single summary lesson...

Notice [2] these lessons are selective—that is, because it's impossible to condense 67 hours of exposition into a 50 minutes, I have to be selective in emphasizing particular themes or truths—thus I am not suggesting that these five lessons are the only lessons contained within this letter or even the primary—but they five obvious or central themes taught throughout this letter...

Notice [3] these lessons are important—by this I mean I have sought to select five summary lessons that possess a peculiar relevance to our day—thus these five lessons are not only necessary, selective, but are extremely important...

I. Five Summary Truths Learned

A. We learned that pastoral love and straight talk are not incompatible

1. As we read through these five chapters, two characteristics of its author emerge—pastoral love and a plain straightforward style...
2. For example, throughout the letter John refers to his readers 9 times as “little children” and 5 times as “beloved...”
3. I think it is right to say, that John greatly loved his readers and thus he writes with a deep pastoral concern and love for them...
4. But one doesn't read too far into the letter before they find that this love wasn't contrary to some of the strongest statements within the NT...
5. For example, 1Jn.1:6—“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth...”
6. 1Jn.1:10—“if we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us...” 1Jn.2:4—“he who says, I know Him, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him...”
7. Such statements would be considered by some as unkind and unloving—to speak in such black and white terms—to speak in such blunt terminology...
8. Thus we find that love tells the truth and it does so in no uncertain terms—it doesn't speak with hazy or vague terms...
9. But John's plain speaking is also evident in his treatment of the false teachers, 1Jn.2:22—“who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son...”
10. Because John possessed a deep pastoral love for his readers he was concerned enough to speak openly and plainly concerning false teachers...
11. 1Jn.4:1—“beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world...”
12. In other words—don't believe every person that you hear because not every preacher is telling you the truth—such people are of this world...
13. And again there are those who would speak of such warnings as opposing Christian unity, as being harsh and unloving...
14. But again my friends, we learn from this letter that exposing damnable error and heresy is not unloving but the very expression of love...

15. 1Jn.2:27—“these things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you...” 4:1—“beloved, do not believe every spirit...”
16. Thus as we read through this letter we get a sense of urgency—of seriousness—of sobriety—my friends there is nothing funny about Christianity...
17. Throughout this epistle John has taught us about such topics as sin, salvation, lies, deception, hypocrisy, future judgment, and eternal life...
18. What is possibly funny about any of those subjects—it’s for this reason that John [the apostle of love] speaks in a plain and straightforward manner...
19. Yes truth must be told in love, and it must be told with compassion—but my dear brethren, it must be told...
20. Gabriel Grossi [in a book entitled, Preaching with Biblical passion] said it well—“In dealing with the souls of men our primary concern should be their true spiritual welfare. People need to hear from the Word of God that which is of maximum profit for their souls. What can I preach and how can I preach to them so that their souls will be spiritually strengthened? How can I present the gospel, both in content and manner, so that it will be used by the Spirit of God to save and to sanctify? These are the kinds of questions that must be uppermost in our thinking in regard to the people to whom we preach to. In preaching so pointedly against sin, my concern should not be: ‘What will they think of me and say about me?’ My concern should not be: ‘Will they get angry at me if I preach the wrath of God, and forcefully apply it to their conscience?’ Preachers must give their people what they need to hear, not what they want to hear! So often preachers conduct their ministries under the control and fear of the pew. Sensitively to people’s concerns about our preaching is appropriate, but to have them set the agenda on what we will say, and how we will say it is simply unbiblical. The pew cannot control the pulpit! True love will seek to do good to the souls of men regardless of their reactions...”

B. We learned of the reality and necessity of an evidential assurance

1. If you recall, I coined this phrase [evidential assurance] several months back, by which I mean—an assurance that uses our evidences of grace as a secondary means to our assurance...
2. This of course stands in sharp contrast to many in our day, who would contend that our assurance is built exclusively upon the promises of God...
3. And I would agree that our assurance is based primarily on the promises of God, but it is not built solely or exclusively upon the promises...
4. 1Jn.3:18-19—“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him...”
5. 1Jn.2:3—“now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments...”—that is, keeping His commandments is an evidence or indication that we know God...
6. And what does it mean to—“keep His commandments...”—well if recall the word rendered “keep” means —“to guard or watch over as precious...”
7. The idea is that His commandments are esteemed as valuable and thus treasured, consulted, and complied with...
8. Thus those who truly know God love and esteem His commandments, so as to walk in them as a way of life...
9. Ps.119:127—“I love your commandments More than gold, yes, than fine gold! Therefore all *your* precepts concerning all *things* I consider *to be* right...”
10. Thus I suggest to you that if the book of 1John has taught us anything, it has taught us the reality and necessity of using our works as evidence of our salvation...
11. Let me quickly suggest two closely related reasons behind this need—[1] works are a fundamental purpose for salvation...
12. Eph.2:10—“for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...”—that is, we have been recreated in Christ for the purpose of performing or doing good works...
13. Thus if good works [keeping the commandments, loving God, and loving others], are a fundamental purpose for salvation how can we be sure that we have salvation if we lack works...

14. Notice [2] works are an inevitable result of salvation, Gal.5:6—“for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love...”
15. This is to say, the salvation described in Scripture and found in Christ, is not received by an empty or dead faith—but a faith that works...
16. J.C. Ryle—“I bless God that our salvation in no wise depends on our own works. By grace we are saved—not by works of righteousness—through faith, without the deeds of the law. But I never would have any believer for a moment forget that our sense of salvation depends much on the manner of our living. Inconsistency will dim our eyes and bring clouds between us and the sun. The sun is the same behind the clouds, but you will not be able to see its brightness or enjoy its warmth, and your soul will be gloomy and cold. It is in the path of well-doing that the dayspring of assurance will visit you and shine down upon your heart...”

C. We learned of the necessity and radical nature of the new birth

1. If we have learned anything from this letter it is this—Christians have been radically changed in such a way that they no longer live in the same way they once did...
2. Thus no fewer than 8 times John expressly refers to their new birth and the radical changes that it accomplished...
3. For example, 1Jn.3:9—“whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin because he has been born of God...”
4. 1Jn.5:4—“for whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith...”
5. What inferences can be drawn or concluded from this lesson? Notice two—[1] it says something about our native or natural condition...
6. By this I mean if nothing short of a total change is necessary, then of necessity our natural condition is one total depravity...
7. 1Jn.3:10—“in this children of God and the children of the devil are obvious...”—in other words, within regeneration a child of the devil is made a child of God...
8. Oh my brethren, the humbling and sober reality of man’s native and nature depravity is always a relevant and necessary topic...
9. A.W. Pink—“The need for regeneration lies in man’s total depravity. Every member of Adam’s race is a fallen creature, and every part of his complex being has been corrupted by sin. Man’s heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. His mind is blinded by Satan and darkened by sin, so that his thoughts are only evil continually. His affections are prostituted, so that he loves what God hates and hates what God loves. His will is enslaved from good and opposed to God. He is without righteousness, under the curse of the law and is the captive of the devil. His condition is truly deplorable, and his case desperate...if follows, then, as an inevitable consequence that man needs the aid of a Higher Power to effect a radical change in him. There is only One who can effect that change: God created man, and God alone can re-create him. Hence the imperative demand, ‘Ye must be born again...’”
10. Notice [2] it says something about our present state or condition—we have been born of God, that we now possess an entirely new nature...
11. Things that we previously hated we now love, and things we previously loved we now hate—oh my dear brethren—what an amazing change takes place in regeneration...
12. Christianity is a repairing of the old man, it’s but the birthing of a new one, 2Cor.5:17—“therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation....”

D. We learned that doctrine and experience are necessarily related

1. Here I am attempting to wed together two clear strands of John’s thought—objective doctrine or truth and subjective personal experience...
2. Throughout the letter we have some of the most glorious doctrinal statements found in the entire New Testament...

3. For example, we have repeated affirmations of Christ' literal incarnation and His substitutionary and penal sacrifice...
4. Notice 4:2—"by this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God..."
5. 4:10—"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins..."
6. Furthermore we find some of the most absolute and concise statements concerning the nature and character of God...
7. For example, 1:5—"this is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all..."
8. From these sampling statements we can glean this very important and relevant truth—John understood the importance of objective doctrinal truth...
9. And notice he offers these statements in a very clear and dogmatic manner—he states them in an assertive and uncompromising way...
10. For example, 3:5—"and we know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin..."
11. That is—we are absolute certain of such things as Christ's literal incarnation, His sinless humanity, and His atoning sacrifice...
12. Oh my friends is it not true that what the church must be absolutely certain on, is the fundamental and essential truths of the Christian faith...
13. Such truths as penal substitution and literal incarnation must be taught consistently, passionately, clearly, and dogmatically...
14. Yet, the religion of this epistle is far from a mere intellectualism, that's merely concerned with an orthodox creed but no personal confession...
15. For example, 1Jn.4:15—"whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God..."
16. Notice the necessity for precise objective truth—"whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God..."—that is, it matters what you believe...
17. But notice the need for personal ownership of that creed—"whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God..."—that is whoever personal, from the heart, owns Him as such...
18. Notice the result—"God abides in him, and he in God..."—the result will be a personal, intimate, and experimental relationship...
19. V16—"and we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him..."
20. We have a wonderful summary statement concerning the nature of Christian experience—"we have known and believed the love that God has for us..."
21. We haven't merely heard about that love—we haven't merely studied about that love—but we come to experience that love...

E. We learned of the need, nature, and centrality of brotherly love

1. If I was pressed to suggest a single theme that was repeated in this epistle more than any other, I would suggest love in general and brotherly love in particular...
2. Thus repeatedly we are exhorted to love another, from the heart, in a practical manner, and out of love for God...
3. 1Jn.4:7—"beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God..."
4. And thus we finish our study through John's first epistle—a book that I trust will be one you turn to again and again throughout the years to come. Amen.